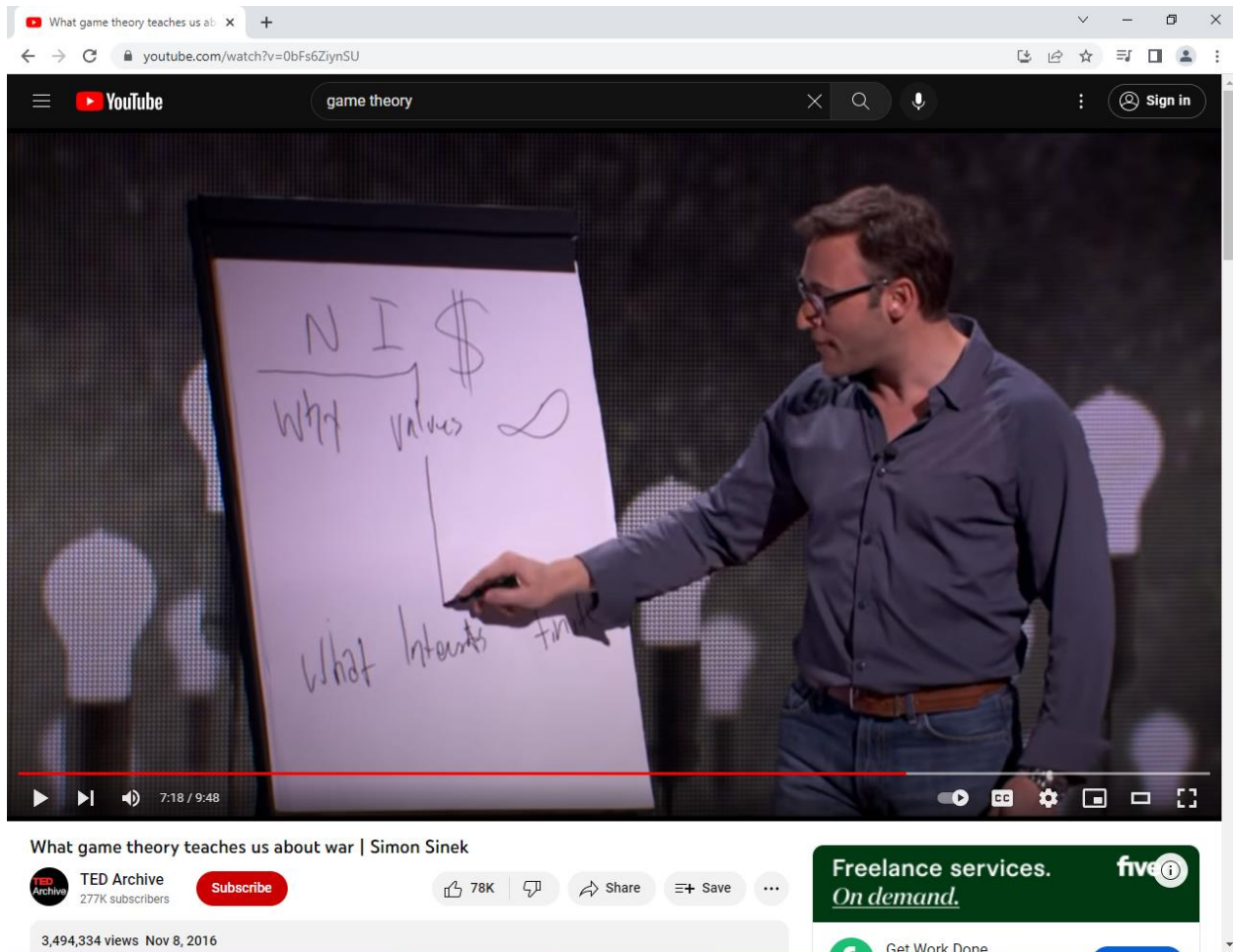


What Game Theory Teaches Us About War | Simon Sinek

(2016-11-08)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bFs6ZiynSU>

Description:

What would happen if 'win' and 'lose' are no longer the only options when fighting a war? What if a third, more abstract ideal becomes the goal? And -- what if not all the players are aware of the new rules? Simon Sinek uses game theory to explain some of the strategies and outcomes behind past and present wars.

TEDArchive presents previously unpublished talks from TED conferences.

Enjoy this unedited talk by Simon Sinek.

Filmed at TEDTalksLive in 2015

Transcript: (auto-generated)

0:05

[Applause]

0:05

[Music]

0:06

[Applause]

0:13

thanks very much at the end of the Cold

0:18

War the United States made a policy

0:23

decision that maybe one of the biggest

0:25

mistakes of the 20th century

0:27

it's contributed to create chaos and

0:29

uncertainty in this current day and it's

0:32

not based on politics it's based on

0:35

games in game theory there are two types

0:39

of games there are finite games and

0:41

there are infinite games a finite game

0:45

is defined as known players fixed rules

0:48

and agreed-upon objective baseball right

0:52

an infinite game is defined as known and

0:55

unknown players the rules are changeable

0:58

and the objective is to perpetuate the

1:01

game when you pit a finite player versus

1:04

a finite player the system is stable

1:06

baseball is stable so is conventional

1:09

war for that matter when you pit an

1:11

infinite player versus an infinite

1:13

player the system is also stable the

1:15

Cold War was stable and that's because

1:18

in an infinite game there are no winners

1:19

and losers we cannot lose the game and

1:22

so we work to keep the game in play

1:25

right in fact because there are no

1:27

winners and losers the only thing a

1:29

player can do is drop out when they

1:31

either run out of the resources or the

1:33

will to play problems arise however when

1:37

you pit a finite player versus an

1:40

infinite player

1:41

it's the finite player who then gets

1:43

caught in quagmire this happens in

1:46

business all the time

1:47

the game of business is an infinite game

1:50

the concept of business has existed

1:52

longer than every single company that

1:54

exists right now and it'll exist long

1:57

after all the companies that exist right

1:58

now go away the funny thing about

2:00

business is the number of companies that

2:02

are playing finite they're playing to

2:05

win they're playing to be the best

2:07

they're playing to beat the quarter or

2:09

the year and they're always frustrated

2:11

by that company that has an amazing

2:14

vision a long-term vision that seems to

2:16

drive them crazy and over the long term

2:19

that player will always win and the

2:22

other player will run out of resources

2:23

or the will

2:24

and they'll either go out of business

2:25

will be bought or sold or mirrage

2:27

required at whatever it is this is also

2:30

what happened to the United States in

2:32

Vietnam the United States was fighting

2:34

to win the Vietcong were fighting for

2:37

their lives they would fight forever if

2:39

necessary this is also what happened

2:41

when the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan

2:43

the Soviets were fighting to beat the

2:46

Mujahideen and the Mujahideen were

2:47

fighting to survive fighting for their

2:49

very very lives now when it comes to

2:52

policy you have to know what game you're

2:53

playing so you can play the right rules

2:54

and this became completely clear to me

2:57

when the Soviets actually drove their

2:59

tracked tanks into Afghanistan and

3:01

Brzezinski the National Security Advisor

3:04

for President Carter was called into the

3:06

president's office and the president

3:07

asked him what is the policy of the

3:10

United States and Brzezinski said the

3:13

policy of the United States is to eject

3:15

the Soviet it's a finite goal and then

3:18

almost as an offhanded comment he says

3:20

and if we can't do that we'll make it as

3:24

expensive as possible for them to stay

3:26

in other words the United States

3:28

accidentally had an infinite strategy

3:30

which is not fixed in time and we don't

3:33

know exactly what it looks like what

3:34

we're trying to do is drain the enemy of

3:37

will and the resources to continue to

3:39

play and ten years later the Soviets

3:42

drove their tanks out of Afghanistan

3:44

running out of resources and the will

3:47

now if you think about what happened

3:50

when the Berlin Wall came down we were

3:51

in an infinite game Soviets and the

3:55

United States and the Berlin Wall came

3:57

down and the United States made again

3:59

one of the greatest perhaps one of the

4:01

greatest blunders policy blunders of the

4:03

20th century they announced that they

4:05

had won the game they had won the Cold

4:09

War

4:09

no they didn't the player dropped out

4:12

because they ran out of the will or the

4:14

resources to play and the problem is is

4:17

because they thought they had won the

4:18

war they started acting like victors and

4:21

the United States imposed their will on

4:23

the world for about 11 years and as it

4:26

turns out the world didn't like that too

4:28

much and as what happens in all infinite

4:31

contests new players started to him

4:34

if you consider how the Cold War existed

4:36

it really existed on three tensions

4:39

there was a nuclear tension both both

4:44

states had nuclear weapons to end all

4:46

life there was an ideological tension

4:50

one was an exporter of democracy and

4:52

capitalism the other one is an exporter

4:53

of soviet-style communism and there was

4:56

an economic tension that's what kept the

4:59

Cold War alive and well not

5:02

coincidentally life liberty and the

5:04

pursuit of happiness the only three

5:06

things for which we will bear any burden

5:08

and pay any price and fight forever to

5:10

defend now the nuclear tension has been

5:14

replaced by Pakistan and China China was

5:19

already there Pakistan North Korea

5:21

maybe Iran the ideological tension

5:24

soviet-style communism has been replaced

5:26

by Islamic extremism and the economic

5:29

tension the Soviet Union has been

5:31

replaced by China we don't fear nuclear

5:33

war with China but the point is as all

5:35

three tensions are alive and well and

5:38

you see the problem is is they all know

5:42

who their enemy is but we don't realize

5:44

that the Cold War 2.0 is happening and

5:47

we are still trying to decide which one

5:49

is more important we're trying to win

5:51

and beat all of these things and not

5:52

realize that the game is infinite not

5:55

finite and the United States policies

5:57

these days are become shorter and

5:59

shorter term which creates turmoil and

6:02

chaos in strategy in how we present

6:04

ourselves to the world the easiest way

6:07

to understand the game you're in is when

6:10

you have an opposing force in other

6:12

words not that right so you want great

6:16

leadership you want somebody to say what

6:17

we stand for but if you don't have that

6:19

you get to say not that so it was really

6:21

easy the intelligence services for

6:23

example during the Cold War they fought

6:25

like cats and dogs like they fight now

6:27

but they could all agree on one thing

6:30

not that and they worked really really

6:32

well to combine their forces to face the

6:35

Soviet Union we don't have a singular

6:37

not that anymore and so we're all over

6:39

the place but all of our enemies all

6:41

have a singular not that and it's us

6:45

ideally we want to run all of our

6:47

decisions

6:48

through our values this is these are

6:50

what make us enduring our values our

6:52

enduring and this is what is the

6:53

foundation of an infinite contest

6:55

so you've consider up here is where our

6:57

values lie what I call the why our

6:59

values right

7:01

these things are infinite they're

7:04

enduring right down here you have what I

7:07

call the what these are our interests

7:10

and they are finite and ideally what you

7:15

want to do is you run all decisions

7:17

through our values and then through our

7:18

interests let me show you what that

7:20

looks like sometimes they go in our

7:21

favor and sometimes they don't so for

7:23

example when we go into a battlefield

7:26

and we shoot a bad guy we will take his

7:29

injured body we will bring him into our

7:32

hospitals and we will risk American

7:34

lives to bring him into the hospitals

7:37

use American doctors American beds

7:38

American medicines to nurse him back to

7:40

health that's not in our interests but

7:44

the reason we do it because it's kind of

7:46

who we are it's kind of what we do it's

7:48

like it's our thing right when we make a

7:52

decision based solely on our interests

7:54

it looks like this right

7:55

so should we torture people now the

7:57

reason we did it offshore is because

8:00

everybody kind of knew that that was an

8:02

era thing because if we had no problem

8:04

with it we just do it here

8:05

so we hit it away because we knew it was

8:07

uncomfortable because we know what our

8:08

values are so what's been happening in
8:10
the world is we've been evaluating all
8:12
of the things that have been going on by
8:15
ignoring our values because we don't
8:16
realize we're in an infinite contest and
8:18
we only look at our interests so we
8:20
think about what should we do in Syria
8:21
and we make a very very good decision
8:22
based on Syria our interest in Syria we
8:24
make a decision and what would she do
8:26
what should we do in Crimea and what
8:28
would she what should we do with regards
8:29
to Putin and what should we do with
8:31
regards to Iraq and Afghanistan and
8:34
we're all over the place and the problem

8:36

is when you pull back and take a look

8:39

now nobody has any idea what we stand

8:42

for this is confusing for our allies who

8:47

no longer trust us because we're no

8:48

longer predictable and it's fantastic

8:51

for our enemies because they can exploit

8:53

it ideally what we do is we run all

8:56

decisions through our values first and

8:59

though it may not always go our way

9:01

just like I said we make decisions all

9:04

the time that aren't always in our

9:05

interests like bringing an injured bad

9:07

guy in putting them in our hospitals not

9:09

our interests but what that does it

9:11

makes us predictable and it makes our

9:13

allies trust us because they know what

9:16

we stand for and they will either stand

9:18

with us or they'll stand against us and

9:20

together we will go through the infinite

9:23

contest for as long as it takes this is

9:27

what we're in right now

9:28

the Cold War is alive and well and we

9:32

will not help contribute to stabilizing

9:34

the world until we start playing the

9:35

game were in rather than playing the

9:38

game were not in thank you very much

9:42

[Applause]